

REPORT ON TRIP TO THE  
NETHERLANDS AND FRANCE

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, in the 2 minutes I have left, I would like to comment very briefly on a trip made by the Veterans' Affairs Committee to oversee World War I and World War II cemeteries in the Netherlands and France. The chairman of the committee, the distinguished Senator from Idaho, Mr. CRAIG, organized the trip, with Senator BURR, Senator ISAKSON, and myself.

Let me say to you that it was inspirational to visit the cemeteries—I had never done that before—to see so many marble crosses and marble stars of David. It was especially poignant for me because my father fought in World War I. He left Russia at the age of 18 in 1911 to escape the tyranny. The Czar wanted to send him to Siberia. He wanted to go to Kansas. It was a close call. I say that jokingly. He was proud to serve in the U.S. Army as a Doughboy. It took all of 30 days for him to be inducted, until he was shipped overseas, really, with a big bull's eye on his back as cannon fodder by all means.

When I was growing up, he would regale my brother, my two sisters, and me with World War I songs, such as "It's A Long Way To Tipperary." I recall his singing the song about the bugler in the famous World War I song, "Oh, How I Hate To Get Up In The Morning." It said that if given a chance, he would have shot the bugler. And my father liked to sing that song. He got up early a lot of mornings.

Fighting in the Argonne Forest, he was wounded in action by shrapnel fire. He carried shrapnel in his legs until the day he died. Had the shrapnel hit him a little higher, Harry Specter might have been in one of those cemeteries and he wouldn't have been my father.

It was quite an inspirational trip.

I ask unanimous consent that my written statement be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

I have sought recognition to comment on a trip by the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee to the Netherlands and France from May 26th through June 1st to conduct congressional oversight on World War I and World War II cemeteries in those countries. The trip was organized by the Committee Chairman, Senator LARRY CRAIG (R-ID) and with Senators RICHARD BURR (R-NC) and JOHNNY ISAKSON (R-GA) and myself in attendance. The itinerary included the following cemeteries: Aines-Marne American Cemetery, France; Ardennes American Cemetery, Belgium; Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery, Belgium; Netherlands American Cemetery, The Netherlands; Normandy American Cemetery, France, and Suresnes American Cemetery, France.

It was a sobering and thought provoking trip to see so many marble Crosses and marble Stars of David in symmetrical rows. We know the history of those two wars with so many casualties but until you actually see the tombstones it is an abstraction.

We found all of the cemeteries to be meticulously maintained. The grass was mani-

cured, the foliage was magnificent and the unique shrines at each cemetery were very impressive. From the point of view of congressional oversight, the Senate delegation was unanimous in concluding that the American Battle Monuments Commission has done a superb job in maintaining the cemeteries.

On May 28th we attended a particularly impressive cemetery at the Netherlands American Cemetery with dozens of wreaths being laid in honor of the fallen veterans. At the Suresnes American Cemetery in Paris, the memorial recounted the statistics of the 126,000 U.S. soldiers who were killed in World War I and the 407,300 U.S. soldiers killed in World War II.

On a personal level, I was especially touched by the graves of World War I veterans because my father, Harry Specter, fought in that War. He came to the United States at the age of 18 in 1911 to escape the Czar's tyranny. The Czar wanted to send him to Siberia. He wanted to go to Kansas. I jokingly say it was a close call.

My father was inducted on May 6, 1918 at Fairbury, Nebraska and shipped out of the United States for France thirty days later. His discharge papers bear the notation: "Character: Excellent".

The reality was that he, like so many others, was sent to France as cannon fodder—with really a big bull's-eye painted on his back. He patriotically brushed off that off and was proud to serve in the Army of his adopted country. He talked jokingly that frequently all they had to eat was "jam sandwiches" which meant two pieces of bread jammed together. He talked about climbing a tree in France to pick fruit for himself and his buddies. That is what his family had done in the village of Batchkurina in the heart of the Ukraine about 160 miles southwest of Kiev. He commented that he was never required to fire his rifle at the German enemy.

When I was growing up, he would regale my brother, two sisters and me with World War I songs such as "It's A Long Way to Tipperary." I recall his singing about the bugler on the famous World War I song "Oh How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning." Fighting in the Argonne Forest, he was wounded in action by shrapnel fire. He carried shrapnel in his legs until the day he died. Had the shrapnel hit him a little higher, Harry Specter might have lain in one of the cemeteries and he wouldn't have been my father.

The U.S. Ambassador to France, Craig R. Stapleton, invited the delegation to dinner on May 31st, attended by French officials and embassy personnel. During the course of the evening, Ambassador Stapleton spoke about a relative, Flem Stapleton, the son of his grandfather's first cousin Benjamin Franklin Stapleton. He recounted finding his relative's name on the roster of World War I veterans killed in action which prompted him to do some research. He found that Flem Stapleton was killed in action in his first battle at the age of twenty. When Ambassador Stapleton recounted the story, tears came to his eyes and he was unable to continue for a few moments.

When I was asked to speak a few moments later, I said Ambassador Stapleton had really captured and articulated the emotion which I felt on seeing the Crosses and Stars of David.

The visits to the cemeteries gave me new meaning for patriotism and the great contributions which our servicemen and women have made to the security of our nation and the freedom we all enjoy.

THE CONTINUING SERVICE OF  
SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the Senate has just marked another milestone with the extraordinary service of the senior Senator from West Virginia. I consider him a mentor and a friend. I have had the privilege of serving with Senator BYRD on the Judiciary Committee and I currently serve with him on the Appropriations Committee. I know firsthand his work as the Senate majority leader, the Senate Democratic leader, and as our President pro tempore.

He understands the role of the Senate and the need for it to act as a check and a balance on the President. In recent years, he has been discovered by a new generation of Americans as a true Senator.

By his work and his example he teaches each of us every day what the Senate should be and must be if the constitutional design of the Founders is to serve and preserve our rights and liberties.

One of the great privileges of serving in the Senate is to serve with the senior Senator from West Virginia. One of the great pleasures is to hear him speak on this floor. His continuing contributions to the Senate and the Nation are too numerous to recount but I would like to mention one of the many outstanding moments.

Senator BYRD has preserved the Constitution from numerous assaults. He takes seriously the Senate oath to "support and defend" the Constitution. He has protected it from a number of ill-conceived and politically-motivated amendments, including the so-called balanced budget amendment and the line-item veto. The last time the Senate considered amending the Constitution to cut back on our individual liberties and limit the first amendment, that guarantee in the Bill of Rights of our freedom of religion and speech, it was in no small way thanks to Senator BYRD that the Constitution and the rights of Americans were preserved.

On March 29, 2000, he gave an extraordinary speech. I was a manager on the matter and was fortunate to be present. I noted at the time that "periodically, we hear greatness in speeches," and observed that this was a case where the Senate had heard greatness. It is a speech that students of the Constitution and of constitutional history should study.

In the days ahead, we will again be challenged to amend our Bill of Rights for the first time in over 200 years. I can think of no one I would rather stand with and fight for the Constitution than the senior Senator from West Virginia. Every day he walks on the floor of this Senate carrying the Constitution because he knows that the liberties of the American people are not to be sacrificed for passing political favor. He is a fierce advocate for the Nation, the Constitution, the Senate, but first and foremost, for the people of the State of West Virginia whom he represents so ably.